


Abraham Lincoln

Address by - - - - -

RT. REV. C. E. CHENEY, D. D.





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Chas. Edwin Cheney

THE GRAND ARMY HALL

AND

MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

LINCOLN BIRTHDAY SERVICE

IN MEMORIAL HALL

ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY THE TWELFTH

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FOURTEEN

AT THREE O'CLOCK P. M.

ADDRESS BY

RT. REV. CHARLES EDWARD CHENEY, D. D.

SERVICES IN MEMORIAL HALL

The President, GENERAL ROBBINS: We will now open the exercises of the day. Dr. Stone will please invoke the Divine blessing. (Invocation by Dr. Stone.)

BY THE PRESIDENT, GEN. WALTER R.
ROBBINS.

There was handed to me a few moments ago an original letter written by Abraham Lincoln, which I will read to you, thinking it may be of some interest. (Reading)

“Springfield, March 29, 1853.

Dear Dummer:

Enclosed find three dollars, the smallest sum I can send by mail, for the \$2.50 which you advanced for me, which please accept together with my thanks, and offer to reciprocate when occasion presents.”

I am told that Mr. Lincoln was in some place and found himself stranded, and so borrowed two dollars and fifty cents to get back to Springfield, and he sent the lender three dollars.

This is the natal day of Abraham Lincoln. We bow in reverence to the name of the greatest human character our country has produced.

For more than half a century the soldiers of the Union Army of the War of the Rebellion have venerated the name of Lincoln, and have taught their children to know his deeds and learn his character.

For seventeen years, the Grand Army Hall and Memorial Association, on the anniversary of his birth, has assembled in this sanctuary to give its tribute to his memory.

Sometimes, aye, often, I wonder if the people of this country—especially those coming after the civil war period, have any real conception of what was done for them by the soldiers of the Grand Army.

Through the directing force of the mind of this Master Spirit and incomparable patriot, the men of the Grand Army were able to hand down to you the absolute control of all the territory of the United States.

The former British Ambassador to the United States, the Right Honorable James Bryce, has, in his latest publication pointedly and clearly set forth that, but for the success of the Union arms, instead of our having one common country, we would have two and possibly three.

Think of that statement; no man living or dead better understands the people of the United States, than James Bryce. No man more sympathetic and hopeful for our success than he.

That we have a unified country is due absolutely to the soldiers of our great civil war.

THE MEN OF THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC.

The ranks of the Grand Army are vanishing, disappearing into that land, so aptly described by that erudite scholar and wise philosopher, Li Hung Chang, as "the land of perpetual sunshine and golden hours." They are all three waiting for us. *"If we can but succeed in turning toward us the soul faces" of the immortal Lincoln and the heroic dead of our country's greatest struggle, and "cause them to understand" that we still revere their memory, and are still battling for the cause of human liberty, the integrity of the individual and the sanctity of our common country, then we will have fulfilled a duty we owe to them, to ourselves and to our God.

That these "soul faces" of the immortal Lincoln, the comrades of our great trial are now, this day, this moment, looking down upon us, is my full conviction.

THE PRESIDENT: It is a pleasure to introduce to this audience one who served, and served ably, and in the Spanish-American War, commanding his Regiment, the 1st Illinois Infantry, in the investment of Santiago de Cuba. Colonel Lauman is the son of an able General, who commanded the Fourth Division of the Sixteenth Army Corps. I have the pleasure of presenting to you, Colonel Lauman.

Col. Lauman then read President Lincoln's Gettysburg address.

*The Life and Times of Madame Marie Madeleine, Countess of LaFayette, by Lillian Rea.

THE PRESIDENT: This day is also the anniversary of the birth of Bishop Cheney. (Applause.) Seventy-eight years old to-day. (Applause.) The history of Chicago would be incomplete without a large and favorable mention of Bishop Cheney. For more than fifty years—fifty-four, if I mistake not—he has been ardently engaged in civic endeavor and church work in the city of Chicago. It is no wonder to all of us that he is so much respected and so well beloved by all that are privileged to know him. It is a joy to present Bishop Cheney to you. Bishop Cheney.

ADDRESS BY RIGHT REV. CHARLES ED-
WARD CHENEY, D. D.

*Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, and Com-
patriots:*

An anniversary is always in its intent and purpose a monument. Men inscribe upon a certain day a great name, or the record of some historic event, but the same relentless law that bids time crumble the granite into dust and wear away the inscription upon memorial brass, holds equal sway when we carve upon an annually recurring day a record that we try to make imperishable.

Some of the emperors of Rome solemnly decreed that all the world should celebrate their birthdays, as long as that world should last. But who among us of the twentieth century knows, or cares, what day of all the years Nero or Caligula or Vespasian first looked upon the sun?

It is with something like shame and humiliation that we older men recall the years that immediately preceded the War for the Union. True, the Fourth of July and the 22nd of February were appropriately marked in our almanacs, and, indeed, there were citizens here and there who might casually refer to the events connected with those dates. In some communities, the birthday of the country and the birthday of the Father of his country might secure a public celebration, but, unless my memory fails me with the years, it was a languid celebration and destitute of

all enthusiasm. For, so far as stirring the heart of the people, so far as concerned the rousing of the body politic to an emulation of the sacrifice of our fathers of the revolutionary period, those days might almost as well have been obliterated from the calendar. A marvelous change, however, has passed over the American people during the last century. Patriotic hearts not only revere the memory of Washington, and recall with glad enthusiasm the day when the independence of this land was proclaimed to the world, but they pay their tribute of immortal honor to the men who fought on every field of the Civil War, from Bull Run to Appomattox. (Applause.)

Sir Walter Scott has given deathless fame to the man who acquired the singular title of "Old Mortality." Quietly and silently that old man stole into the grave yards among the Scottish hills, and with mallet and chisel deepened the inscriptions and epitaphs that celebrated the persecuted covenanters. Such is the work, precisely such, upon which the American people have been set by the new spirit of love of country kindled since 1865 closed the bloody conflict, and made the nation in the glowing and prophetic words of Mr. Webster, "One and indivisible."

Our popular literature, from school books to ponderous volumes of history, tells the story of the devotion of the men of '61 to the cause of freedom. The battle-fields on which our heroes fought are shrines to which we make pilgrimages, and where we bare our heads and tread softly and reverently, as be-

ing on holy ground. The Government and the people have united in splendid monuments erected over the graves of our soldiers, or to mark the spot on which they gave their lives for their country; but above all, this day, sacred to every true American heart, is never now permitted—thanks to you men of the Grand Army of the Republic—this day is never now permitted, as was once the case with the birthday of Washington, to be neglected or forgotten. (Applause.)

To-day, from ocean to ocean, from the Gulf of the St. Lawrence to that of Mexico, the name of Abraham Lincoln is on every tongue. In every city, and in every hamlet, upon the 12th day of February, the surviving veterans of the great host whom he called to arms, in such gatherings as this have his revered name too deeply engraved in their hearts for any possible obliteration. Even the children in our public schools are celebrating the birth of the saviour of his country, and thus awakening in the minds of those who are soon to take your place and mine, a sense of what the youngest of Americans owes to the pilot of the ship of state, who took the helm in his grasp when the nation was amid the breakers of disunion.

If, in accepting your invitation to speak to you to-day, I repeat that which you already know, it will only prove that the profound love of the American people for the name and the fame, the character and the life of Abraham Lincoln has, long before this day, brought out from every nook and cor-

ner of the country, every scrap that he ever wrote, even to the letter that was read you to-day—brought out everything that represents the elements of his character and the achievements of his career.

May I be permitted to begin to-day with pointing out his singular tenacity of purpose. As I was preparing this address, there lay before me a rude wood cut of the hovel where on the 12th day of February, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was born. A more wretched, comfortless log cabin no pioneer of the wilderness ever reared for the shelter of his household. And even more squalid in its poverty, devoid of all comfort, was the hut to which the boy of seven years was taken when his father removed from Kentucky to Indiana. It had but one room, with a dismal loft above. There was no window or door or floor. Not even the traditional deer skin curtained the one place of entrance and exit. Not even oiled paper filled the aperture that served as a window. The earth beaten by bare or moccasined feet was the only pretense of a floor.

The boy Abraham slept at night upon a heap of leaves in a corner of the loft to which he climbed by means of a ladder formed of pegs one above the other in the rude wall.

Are there any places more squalid than that in the slums of Chicago, or more absolutely discouraging to the ambitions and hopefulness of a boy?

We are moving heaven and earth in all our great cities to uplift, civilize and refine the denizens of the

lowest and vilest corners. But to the miserable abode of the boy Abraham Lincoln, no sociologist came like an angel of mercy, no settlement shed its light upon the darkness of that child's environment; no benevolent societies, organized for showing kindness to people under such circumstances as his, poured out money like water in redeeming the social condition and in elevating the lives of the submerged class to which that boy belonged.

Contemporaneous with the birth of Abraham Lincoln, on February 12, 1809, was the birthday of the great scientist Darwin. One of the theories which that philosopher proclaimed has been taken up and exaggerated far beyond the point that Darwin himself attempted to go, until the theory comes to this, that every man is what he is solely on account of what his environment makes him. Like the fabled chameleon he has to take the color of his surroundings. Now, if ever there was a complete refutation of such a dogma, it is found in the career of Abraham Lincoln. (Applause.) Out of the most hopeless surroundings, this man rose to be the ruler of seventy millions of free men, and, to a greatness that to-day makes him the peer, if not the superior, of the most illustrious names in human history. What produced this development of character? Under God it was wrought by an intense and unbending tenacity of purpose.

In a speech made in the campaign of 1860, Mr. Lincoln said:—

“I am not ashamed to confess that twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer, splitting rails, at work on a flat boat. I want every man to have a chance.”

How clearly that indomitable determination to rise above his environment ruled his life, is proven when you contemplate the degree of education that he succeeded in attaining. He needed no passing of a compulsory law in order to get learning. That wonderful English style of his which culminated in the noble address, which Colonel Lauman so admirably read to you a moment ago—that English style was acquired by the patient study of a good many less books than those of that famous shelf that President Eliot has been talking about. (Laughter and applause.) Half a dozen books were all that he owned, all that he could borrow. He had only the English Bible, Aesop's Fables, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, some early and rudimentary history of the United States, and a copy of the statutes of the State of Indiana. But these he read by day when his plow horse stopped at the end of a furrow to rest, or at night by the light of a pine knot torch; but with these his intellect, and his memory, were literally saturated. The same persistency revealed itself in his political career. I do not believe that in the days of his early youth, ambitious though he was, he ever dreamed that the hour would come when he was to be the head of a great nation and the pilot of the ship of state in the

perils of the bloodiest of Civil Wars. But he did realize that an American boy had a chance to be whatever tireless tenacity of purpose could achieve.

In his first ambition to be a member of the legislature, you remember that he was signally defeated. His first candidacy for congress met with like disaster. After that masterly campaign of his joint debate with Senator Douglas, that placed him at the very head of American public speakers, he yet was doomed to see his adversary triumph over him.

Few are the men who would not under such repeated blows of adversity, and under such singularly unfavorable environment, have become soured, and lost all ambition. But, after each defeat, this man's persistency was proof against his disappointments. Nor did he yield one inch of ground he had lost, until that loss was retrieved and the nation's approval lifted him up to its supremest place.

But there is another phase in this man's nature that I think is more remarkable than his determined and wonderful persistency. I mean the singular sweetness, tenderness and sympathy that marked his whole life.

No tree of our American forest survives rough treatment as does the oak. Our northern winters cannot freeze out the oak's vitality. It holds its head erect against the fiercest blast of the northern winds. Nature seems powerless to check its development. But the battle that it has fought with the elements, the struggle to live, year after year, leaves the full grown

oak-tree tough but gnarled, twisted, ugly—type of many a self-made man. All over this country, with its matchless opportunities, are men who are classed as monumental proofs of the results that can be accomplished by courage, by tenacity of purpose and ceaseless energy in order to win success. Childhood and youth, with such men, were very frequently one long, hard fought battle with adverse environment. They had scanty education, social advantages were denied them, disappointments swept down upon them like the blasts of the north wind; but nothing could keep them down; defeats became but the stepping stones by which they crossed over to the shore of ultimate success.

It is such men that in a large degree dominate our great corporations to-day, and rule sovereign in the realm of commerce. But there is a tendency of the self-made man to harden the inner nature, to blunt the natural tender sympathies of the heart, and freeze out affection. Such men are very apt to say to themselves that they had no helpers in battling with their early difficulties, and why should they be expected to stretch out a helping hand to those hard pressed in like conflict? Let the rising generation take care of itself, as they took care of themselves, and win its victories, as they won theirs, by giving and taking hard knocks.

Well, Abraham Lincoln was a self-made man, if there ever was one on this earth. But, his triumphs over obstacles that to others, smaller and weaker men,

would have proved utterly insuperable, gave him a fellow feeling for a brother among the humblest of human kind, and made the poorest, the most obscure, and the most downtrodden to love him and trust him, as a little child loves his father. (Applause.)

Back of that comprehensive intellect and that indomitable will was a great heart, as loving as that of a little child, as tender and full of sympathy as the heart of a woman. Well did a later president say: "Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* I count among the greatest books that were ever written, and Abraham Lincoln is the Great Heart of American public life."

The illustrations of that gentle sympathy crowd the many biographies in which his life has been related. Doubtless there is hardly a person in this room that has not read them over and over again, and yet I cannot help feeling that in this presence and under this roof, on this occasion, and on this one day of all the year, it is well that they should be recalled to memory.

An enlisted man in a Vermont regiment, through some mistake, I know not what, had been permitted to be upon sentry duty for three successive days and nights. Worn out with the loss of sleep, the tired watchman was arrested sleeping on his post, and the day was fixed for his execution; but when the President heard the pitiful story, he signed an order for the man's pardon and release, and sent it by a messenger to the camp. On the morning of the day ap-

pointed for the execution, Mr. Lincoln suddenly be-
thought himself that it was possible that the missive
that he had forwarded might not have reached the
commanding officer. He telegraphed, but received no
reply. Then he ordered his carriage, and drove ten
miles over a dusty Virginia road to the outposts of the
army, that he might personally save the life of a man
he never saw.

In another of the hundreds of like cases, which ap-
pealed to his tender heart, Mr. Lincoln turned from a
pardon freshly signed, and holding his pen poised for
a moment in the air, said, "I could not think of go-
ing into eternity with that boy's blood on my soul."
"It is not wonderful," he added, "that a boy raised on
a farm and accustomed to go to bed with the chickens
should fall asleep on his watch. I cannot let him be
shot." I am not surprised that when later that boy
was found dead upon the bloody field of Fredericks-
burg, they found upon his heart a faded photograph
of Abraham Lincoln, and under it the words writ-
ten, "God bless the President." (Applause.)

At the close of a week of ceaseless interruptions by
the cares of state, Mr. Lincoln, completely worn out,
had been ordered by his physician to get some rest.
As he passed through a corridor to his own private
rooms, he caught the sound of the voice of a little
child crying. Ringing for his attendant, he said, "Is
there not a woman and a little baby out there?" Old
Daniel, his colored servant, who related the incident,
replied that a poor forlorn creature from somewhere

among the mountains of Pennsylvania, with her infant in her arms, had been waiting for three days in the ante-room, while senators and politicians were gaining an audience with the President. "Send for her at once," was the direction. It was the same old story. Her husband, court-martialed for desertion, was to be shot on Monday morning, and already it was Friday afternoon. From her home in the Pennsylvania hills the poor creature had some how—nobody knows exactly how—found her way to Washington, and there, pale and frightened, jostled by placemen and flunk-eyes, she sat in her wornout hood and her faded shawl, waiting for her turn.

As a few minutes later she went out from the office of the president, the pardon in her possession, the old negro who knew his master's heart so well, turned to her and said: "Madam, it was the baby that did that." (Applause.)

May I, in closing, touch upon another feature of the life which we Americans delight to honor? One day, five years ago, glancing at my Saturday evening paper, among the announcements of religious services was one that made indignation surge through every fibre of my being. A lecturer of an Oriental name, suggesting an Asiatic origin, announced that on the day following he would speak on the topic "Lincoln the Infidel." I neither know nor care what that refugee from some eastern land may have said, but I tell you, I should be untrue to the deepest convictions of my nature, and of reverence to the great man whose

memory I love, and whom I try to honor to-day, if I did not enter my protest against such a slander and insult to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. (Applause.)

The only time that I was ever permitted to see Abraham Lincoln was where he appeared a devoted worshiper in a Christian church. On the morning of December 25, 1860, I conducted services and preached in St. James Church on the north side. As during the singing of a hymn I glanced over the congregation, my attention was attracted by a tall ungainly figure, which towered head and shoulders above all others round about him, and in an instant I recognized, from pictures that were everywhere during that campaign, the rugged, sad face of the man who just nineteen days before had been elected President of the United States. (Applause.) Although not an Episcopalian, he reverently conformed to the attitudes that the services demanded.

I can readily believe, if you will pardon me for saying so, that that profound intellect had pretty poor feeding that day in the sermon of a callow young minister just out of the theological seminary, only 24 years old. (Laughter.) But Mr. Lincoln listened to the utterances of that boy as though I had been the greatest preacher on the face of the earth. The memory of that day has survived to prepare me to adduce other and more definite proofs that, whatever Mr. Lincoln was, he was *not* an infidel.

A few months after that little glimpse of the great

man thus vouchsafed to me, Mr. Lincoln bade farewell to his neighbors at Springfield. Do you recall his language? He said: "I now leave you, not knowing when, or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. With the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me and yet remain with you, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as you in your prayers will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell." And that is "Abraham Lincoln the Infidel." (Applause.)

No doubt, as his partner, Mr. Herndon, has asserted, he was skeptical in his youth and early manhood. But the evidence is simply abundant and overwhelming that when the terrible responsibilities of his life in Washington, and the anxieties of the Civil War came upon him, a great change swept over his mind and heart.

He arose at early dawn, and every morning spent an hour, from four to five o'clock, in the study of the Bible. One day his most intimate friend, Mr. Speed, entered the President's private room, at the Soldiers' Home, outside of Washington, where you know he so long sojourned. Knowing Mr. Lincoln's views in youth, Mr. Speed said "Well, Mr. Lincoln, if you have recovered from your skepticism, I have not." Rising, the President laid his hand affectionately upon the shoulder of his friend, and said, "Speed, you are all wrong. Take all this book that you can, upon rea-

son, and the balance on faith, and you will be a happier and a better man.” (Applause.)

When his beloved child was taken from him, a well-known Massachusetts woman expressed her sympathy in his bereavement. He thanked her gently, and said “I am going to carry my sorrow to God.” A few days later she asked him if he could trust in God. “I think I can,” he said, “I wish I had your childlike faith, but I think He will give it to me.” Does that sound like “Lincoln the Infidel”?

The Saturday before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, in a cabinet meeting, Mr. Lincoln gave his reasons for it. Then he solemnly said, “I promised it to God.” Secretary Chase turned to him and said “Mr. President, did I correctly understand you?” “Yes,” answered Mr. Lincoln, “I made a solemn vow to God that if General Lee should be driven back from Pennsylvania I would give freedom to the slaves.”

A general of the Civil War, still surviving, relates that in an interview with Mr. Lincoln, after Gettysburg, the President frankly told him that when Lee crossed the Potomac and entered Pennsylvania “I went to my room and I got down on my knees in prayer. I felt that I must put my trust in God. I had done my best to do my duty, but the burden was more than I could bear, and I prayed Him to help us, and my prayer was answered.”

Bishop Simpson, to whom the President was deeply attached, has borne his testimony, which surely no

man will question, that after every interview at the White House, Mr. Lincoln would say to him, "Bishop, don't leave me without prayer." And then behind closed doors those two great men knelt down, and like children joined together in seeking the grace of God. This is the man whom a Chicago lecturer styles "Lincoln the Infidel."

True, the great President never joined any church. But do not forget that the great spiritual change which he candidly avowed, had been wrought in him only during the last two or three years of his career. I firmly believe that had his noble life been spared a little longer to his country, he would have put the cap-stone on what I am satisfied was his genuine Christian character, by acknowledging it publicly before he died, and enlisting in the army of the Lord.

On the day after the foul murder that bereaved the nation, I found myself one of a vast crowd that aimlessly thronged the streets of Chicago. Business was forgotten. Pleasure could no longer allure, and men whose eyes had long been strangers to tears, wept unashamed, as they met. So, we, after almost fifty years, may well mourn that such a man should have died at the hands of an assassin.

But friends, this is no day for sorrow. We are not celebrating the death of Abraham Lincoln, but the day of his birth. Let us rejoice and thank God that into such a world as ours a man like Abraham Lincoln was ever born. (Applause.)

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